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ABSTRACT

Forty-eight undergraduate secondary education majors were involved in an investigation of the relationships between participation in a preservice secondary school reading methods course (which included sharing of leisure reading books as well as the traditional format) and changes in attitudes toward teaching reading in the content areas, in attitudes toward personal leisure reading, and in number of leisure reading books read during a given period of time. Three dependent variables were selected for examination: pre and posttreatment scores on a teaching-reading-in-the-content-areas inventory: pre and posttreatment scores on a reading attitudes measure: and number of leisure reading books read during comparable time periods during the semester-long course. The results indicated the following: a secondary school reading methods course such as the one studied can be of benefit if changing attitudes is one of the instructor's objectives: such a program can effect a positive change in students' attitudes toward teaching reading in the content areas, and undergraduate students will do more leisure reading when encouraged to do so. (FL)

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Changes in Reading-Related Attitudes During a One-Semester Pre-Service Course in Secondary Reading Methods

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In recent years, reading researchers have begun to examine the reading abilities, habits, and attitudes of both elementary and secondary pre-service teachers. Such research is based on the assumption that there is a high positive correlation between teachers' reading behaviors and students' reading behaviors. The results have not been encouraging. For example, Mueller (1973) surveyed pre-service teachers on their leisure-time activities and found that 40% ranked reading fourth or lower on a list of seven leisure activities. Hawkins (1967)

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found that nearly 20% of the pre-service teachers had read no books over a summer. Odland and Ilstrup (1963) report that 10% of pre-service teachers had read no book during a six-month period. In addition only 30% had read five or more books during that period.

In addition to reading habits, it would seem to be important to consider pre-service secondary teachers' attitudes toward teaching reading in the content area. As Vaughan (1977, p. 606) notes, "those teachers who are aware of and sympathetic to the difficulties their students may have reading their textbooks are likely to be the teachers who will learn. Resolution of the problem, then, may well begin with the teacher's attitude toward the problem." With the increase in pre-service secondary reading methods courses throughout the nation, more secondary teachers are now becoming familiar with techniques to help students read their textbooks. But what are their attitudes toward incorporating those techniques into their classrooms? Can a pre-service course in secondary reading methods affect a positive change in teachers' attitudes toward reading in the content area? Can such a course also encourage pre-service teachers to choose reading as a personal leisure-time activity?

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationships between participation in a pre-service secondary reading methods course (which included sharing of leisure-reading books as well as the traditional secondary reading format) on changes in (a) attitudes toward teaching reading in the content area, (b) attitudes toward personal

leisure-reading, and (c) number of leisure-reading books read during a given period of time.

The following three dependent variables were selected for examination:

1. Pre- and post-treatment scores on the Vaughan "Teaching Reading in the Content Area" inventory (1977);
2. Pre- and post-treatment scores on the Mikulecky Behavioral Reading Attitude Measure (MBRAM) (1978);
3. Number of leisure-reading books read during comparable time segments during the semester.

Gain scores were computed and analyzed for all 3 variables. In addition to overall analyses, the dependent-variable differences between subjects coming from two teaching majors ("academic" and "non-academic") were statistically compared. Furthermore, two subgroups on the Vaughan inventory and MBRAM were also statistically compared.

METHOD

Subjects

Subjects were 48 undergraduate secondary teaching majors at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Twenty-six were juniors, 22 seniors; 22 were males, and 26 were females.

Treatment

The pre-service one-semester course in reading methods met twice weekly for one hour sessions. The course consisted of two components. One component consisted of traditional topics covered in a secondary reading methods course (e.g., vocabulary development, comprehension, attitudes, reading in content areas, critical and creative reading, study skills, reading rate, etc.). The second component consisted of 20 minute book-sharing sessions once a week during the regular class meetings. The students and the instructor reported on, shared, and recommended leisure-reading books. All book-sharing was voluntary and oral; no written reports were required. The instructor frequently instigated book discussions and shared her own current leisure-reading books. Students were encouraged to bring copies of books to class to share with others.

ANALYSIS

After the data were gathered, they were subjected to statistical procedures to answer the following research questions:

1. Will there be significant differences between pre and post treatment scores for all three dependent variables for the overall group?
2. Will there be significant differences between the pre-to-post treatment gains on all three dependent variables for students with an "academic" teaching major (e.g., theatre,

English, journalism, foreign language, social studies, science, elementary education) and for students with a "non-academic" teaching major (e.g., business education, art, physical education, agriculture, home economics)?

In addition, subjects were divided in terms of their scores on the Vaughan and MBRAM pretests. Gain and loss patterns were computed for subjects scoring in the higher and lower half of each pretest.

RESULTS

Overall, the total group increased mean scores on the Vaughan inventory from 70.34 to 75.97, a mean gain of 5.625, which is statistically significant beyond the $P < .001$ level. The total group mean scores on the MBRAM changed from 76.5 to 78.4 for a mean gain of 1.997, which is not statistically significant, since it reached only the level of the $P < .07$. The mean number of leisure-reading books read during comparable time periods changed from 2.2 to 3.1 books, a gain significant at the $P \leq .04$ level.

Patterns of gain and loss on all 3 variables were analyzed for students with "academic" teaching majors. The mean scores on the Vaughan inventory increased from 72.12 to 77.35, a mean gain of 5.23 which is significant at the $P \leq .007$ level. Mean gains for the MBRAM and Books-read variables were not significant at the $P \leq .05$ level.

Patterns of gain and loss were also analyzed for students with "non-academic" teaching majors. The mean scores on the Vaughan inven-

tory increased from 68.33 to 74.40, a mean gain of 6.07 which is significant at the $P < .03$ level. Leisure-reading books read increased from 1.41 to 3.00, a mean gain of 1.625 which is significant at the $P \leq .05$ level.

Finally, patterns of gain and loss in all three variables were analyzed for students whose scores were in either the higher half or lower half on the Vaughan pretest and on the MBRAM pretest. On the Vaughan inventory, the mean pre-to-post gain of subjects in the higher half was 3.33 while the mean pre-to-post gain of subjects in the lower half was 8.69, a difference in mean gains of 5.35, which is significant at the $P < .05$ level. Differences in mean gains on the MBRAM were not significant at the $P \leq .05$ level.

CONCLUSIONS AND LIMITATIONS

Overall then, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. That such a secondary reading methods program is of benefit if raising attitudes is one of the instructor's objectives;
2. That such a total program can raise attitudes toward teaching reading in the content area; and
3. That undergraduate students will do more leisure reading when encouraged to do so.

However, one must remember when interpreting these results that no separation of the two course components was attempted. The combination of the two, however, is somehow related to the reported gains on the dependent variables. In addition, the number of subjects is relatively small. Therefore, these results should be seen as exploratory and not conclusive.

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